SIMPLIFIED SPELLING BOARD
CIRCULAR No. 14, November 28, 1907

THE SIMPLIFICATION OF ENGLISH SPELLING[1]

I. A FIRST STEP

The English language is on the way, as many believe, to become an international language. For this destiny it is peculiarly fitted by its cosmopolitan vocabulary and its grammatic simplicity. It is much easier to learn than any highly inflected language can be, and it has the immense advantage over any invented language that it is the organ of a noble literature and of a civilization already widely diffused in all parts of the earth. There is, however, a wide-spread and well-grounded conviction, that in its progress our language is hampered by one thing—its intricate and disordered spelling, which makes it a puzzle to the stranger within our gates and a mystery to the stranger beyond the seas. English is easy and infinitly adaptable; its spelling is difficult and cumbersome.

Our intricate and disordered spelling also places a direct burden upon every nativ user of English. It wastes a large part of the time and effort given to the instruction of our children, keeping them, for example, from one to two years behind the school-children of Germany, and condemning many of them to alleged "illiteracy" all their days. Moreover, the printing, typewriting, and handwriting of the useless letters which encumber our spelling, wastes every year millions of dollars, and time and effort worth millions more. If, then, the reasonable and gradual simplification of our spelling will aid the spread of English, with the attendant advancement of commerce, of democratic ideals, and of intellectual and political freedom; will economize the time of our school-children and make their work more efficient; and will in other ways economize both time and money, is it not a matter which appeals to common sense, to patriotism, and to philanthropy?

Some of those who would like to see our spelling made simpler,

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[1] A statement similar to what follows (in the first six paragrafs) was publisht in March, 1906, under the heading of "A First Step." Statements similar to part II, "A Statement of Principles" (p. 3), and to part III, "A Statement of Facts" (p. 6) were publisht in June, 1906, and March, 1907, respectivly. All have been widely circulated.

fear that this will obscure the derivation of words; but all etymologists deny the statement and repudiate the argument. Etymology is history, and is now secure in innumerable books. Some object to any change, not realizing that change—much of it simplification—has been almost continuous in the history of English spelling. We do not print Shakespeare's or Bacon's words as they were written; and surely no great catastrophe to English literature or to the literary character of the language will have happened if our successors find—as they certainly will—as great or greater differences between their spelling and that of the present day. In familiar correspondence, and in the public prints, many simplified forms are now used which shock no one's nerves, and in the most emotional poetry forms such as *dropt, stept, prest* (Tennyson, Lowell, Swinburne, and other poets) are printed without attracting attention. In fact, it is probable that if all English words were printed to-morrow in the simpler forms which they unquestionably will bear a hundred years hence, it would take a very little while for us all to become accustomed to them.

With the purpose of expediting this natural process of change, which has been going on for centuries, and, as far as may be possible, of guiding it in the direction of simplicity and economy, an organization known as the Simplified Spelling Board was formed in January, 1906, including educators, scholars, men of letters and men of science, all interested in promoting the cause of intellectual liberty and civic progress, and all of them previously interested in this particular problem. Supplied with funds for its work, chiefly by the liberality of Mr. Andrew Carnegie, the Board has planned a campaign which will extend over a number of years.

In March, 1906, the Board sent forth a preliminary circular in which it askt those who sympathize with its aims to take a simple initial step. There was inclosed a list of three hundred common words, of which different spellings, one more simple and regular than the others, are authorized by the leading dictionaries or by the usage of eminent men of letters. An addrest postal card was also inclosed. Persons who approved the aims of the Board were invited to sign the card, agreeing to use the simpler forms as far as might be practicable, and the Signers had their names placed on file, to receive the publications of the Board.

The appeal is now made to you. The card is inclosed. Will you sign it, and thereby add your name to the roll of the advocates of this important educational reform?

In the short period of preliminary work which has followed the organization of the Board, the results have been beyond expectation. Within a few months a large proportion of the leading philologists, educators, scientists and men of letters announced their adhesion to the movement, and many thousands of teachers, physicians, lawyers, clergymen, and other professional men, business men, firms and corporations, editors and publishers, have signed the agreement to use the simpler spellings as far as may be practicable. The number of these Signers is increasing every day.

The Simplified Spelling Board is publishing a series of separate circulars in which the principal phases of the subject are treated. These circulars will be sent to any one who applies for them. In this introductory circular it is thought advisable to make, first, a brief statement of principles, and, secondly, a brief statement of facts. This is the more necessary, as many of the articles which have appeared with reference to the movement reveal misunderstandings and a lack of information.

II. A STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

1. The Board does not propose any "radical" or "revolutionary" scheme of reform, or any sudden and violent change of English spelling. It does not intend to advocate any modification of English spelling that is not temperate and reasonable. It is not in favor of any freakish orthography of any kind. It does not desire to relax the existing rules and analogies of English spelling. It desires rather to make them more certain, to extend them and enforce them, so as to get rid of needless exceptions, and produce a greater regularity.

2. The Board's chief aim, in view of the spread of the English language thruout the world, is to arouse a wider interest in English spelling, and to call attention to its present chaotic condition—a condition far worse than that existing in any other modern language. The Board believes that when the people who speak English are awake to the many disadvantages of their present spelling, they will be glad to help every effort to better it, as it has been slowly bettered, by individual effort, in the past.

3. The Board began by selecting from the several thousand words now spelled in two or more ways, three hundred of the most common, and it is urging the public to adopt, at once, the simpler of these two forms, and thereby establish the principle of

simplification. This is a natural and easy first step toward further simplifications, such as have been proposed and accepted from time to time, even in the nineteenth century and within living memory. Macaulay, for example, spelled *phaenomenon*, and Parkman *engulph*, altho almost every one now spells *phenomenon* and *engulf*. So *esthetic* and *program* and *develop* are now establisht, and *catalog* and *altho* seem certain to win acceptance in the immediate future.

4. The Board will, however, sooner or later propose further simplifications of the same sort. It will advocate the casting out of certain letters which are not sounded now, which do not affect the pronunciation according to existing analogies, and which merely cumber the orthography. This simplification by omission is nothing new; it is a process which has been going on for centuries and which has given us today, for example, *era, fantasy, public,* and *salad,* instead of *aera, phantasie, publick,* and *sallad;* and, to go a little farther back, *bat, set, dim, sum, fish, true, civil, fatal,* etc., instead of the Elizabethan *batte, sette, dimme, summe, fysshe, trewe, ciuill, fatall,* etc. There is nothing dangerous in urging the acceleration of this normal process.

5. The Board does not propose to make or to recommend any change in the spelling of proper names, especially of surnames. That matter is out of its chosen province. Geographic names often need regulation, but there are societies and boards which take care of this.

6. The Board does not pretend to be "consistent" in the spelling of its publications. The spelling of its publications is made to conform to the lists it may have adopted up to the date of issue. The spelling will therefore become progressivly simpler, and hence less inconsistent. But until all of the old spelling is improved, some of it will remain unimproved.

7. The Board can assure all who cherish the traditions of English literature, that simplifications of spelling will *not* obscure the meaning or the origin of a single word. In this statement all scholars agree, lexicographers and etymologists first of all. The proposed simplifications will *not* make it more difficult for any one to read the masterpieces of our literature; and they will *not* render useless the books now in print. But they *will* save the time of all who write and the money of all who print; and they *will* make the language easier for our own children and for the foreners who are now studying it, in increasing multitudes, all over the world.

SIMPLIFIED SPELLING BOARD
CIRCULAR NO. 16, November 28, 1907
FOURTH EDITION, October 25, 1909

THE SIMPLIFIED SPELLING BOARD

The Simplified Spelling Board was organized January 12, 1906, to promote, by systematic and continued effort, the gradual simplification and regulation of English spelling. The aims of the Board, its principles, and the record of its work, are containd in Circulars 1 and 2 and subsequent circulars, now in part reissued in Circulars 14 and 15, and in circulars that follow.

The original members of the Board were eleven; nineteen more were elected at the time of organization, and the others at intervals since. There are now (October, 1909) forty-six members, including eleven who represent other English-speaking countries—England, Scotland, Wales, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Australia and New Zealand. Other elections are pending.

All of the British and some of the American members of the Simplified Spelling Board are members also of the Simplified Spelling Society of Great Britain, organized in September, 1908. For information address its Secretary, WILLIAM ARCHER, 44 Great Russell Street, London, England.

LIST OF MEMBERS

E. BENJAMIN ANDREWS, formerly chancellor of the University of Nebraska; Lincoln, Neb.

WILLIAM ARCHER, author; London, Eng.

O. C. BLACKMER, publisher; Oak Park (Chicago), Ill.

HENRY BRADLEY, associate editor of the Oxford English Dictionary; formerly president of the Philological Society; Oxford, Eng.

DAVID J. BREWER, justice of the Supreme Court of the United States; Washington, D. C.

JAMES W. BRIGHT, professor of English literature in Johns Hopkins University; Baltimore, Md.

ANDREW CARNEGIE, New York, N. Y.

CLARENCE G. CHILD, professor of English in the University of Pennsylvania; Philadelphia, Penn.

SAMUEL L. CLEMENS ("Mark Twain"), author; Redding, Conn.

MELVIL DEWEY, formerly director of the New York State Library; Lake Placid Club, N. Y.

OLIVER F. EMERSON, professor of rhetoric and English philology in Western Reserve University; Cleveland, O.

DAVID FELMLEY, president of Illinois State Normal University; Normal, Ill.

ISAAC K. FUNK, editor and publisher of the Standard Dictionary; New York, N. Y.

FREDERICK J. FURNIVALL, founder and director of the Early English Text Society, etc.; formerly editor of the Philological Society's (now the Oxford) Dictionary; London, Eng.

LYMAN J. GAGE, formerly secretary of the tresury; Point Loma, Cal.

RICHARD WATSON GILDER, editor of the Century Magazine; New York.

CHARLES H. GRANDGENT, professor of Romance languages in Harvard University; Cambridge, Mass.

WILLIAM T. HARRIS, formerly U. S. commissioner of education; editor of Webster's International Dictionary; Providence, R. I.

GEORGE HEMPL, professor of Germanic philology in Leland Stanford University; Stanford University, Cal.

THOMAS WENTWORTH HIGGINSON, author; Cambridge, Mass.

HENRY HOLT, publisher and author; New York, N. Y.

WILLIAM JAMES, professor of philosophy in Harvard University; Cambridge, Mass.

H. STANLEY JEVONS, lecturer in economics and political science in University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire; Cardiff, Wales.

DAVID STARR JORDAN, president of Leland Stanford University; Stanford University, Cal.

THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY, PRESIDENT; professor of English in Yale University; New Haven, Conn.

ALEXANDER H. MACKAY, superintendent of education of Nova Scotia; Halifax, N. S.

WILLIAM F. MACLEAN, M.P., editor of the Toronto World; Toronto, Ontario.

FRANCIS A. MARCH, professor of English and of comparativ philology in Lafayette College; Easton, Penn.

BRANDER MATTHEWS, professor of dramatic literature in Columbia University; New York, N. Y.

WILLIAM H. MAXWELL, city superintendent of schools; New York, N. Y.

WILLIAM W. MORROW, judge of the United States Circuit Court; San Francisco, Cal.

SIR JAMES A. H. MURRAY, editor of the Oxford English Dictionary; formerly president of the Philological Society; Oxford, Eng.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, formerly president of the United States; New York, N. Y.

CHARLES P. G. SCOTT, SECRETARY; etymological editor of the Century Dictionary; New York, N. Y.

HOMER H. SEERLEY, president of the Iowa State Teachers College; Cedar Falls, Iowa.

WALTER W. SKEAT, professor of Anglo-Saxon in Cambridge University; author of An Etymological Dictionary; formerly president of the Philological Society; Cambridge, Eng.

BENJAMIN E. SMITH, editor of the Century Dictionary; New York, N. Y.

CHARLES E. SPRAGUE, TRESURER; president of the Union Dime Savings Institution; professor of accountancy, New York University; New York, N. Y.

SIR ROBERT STOUT, chief justice of New Zealand; Wellington, New Zealand.

CALVIN THOMAS, CHAIRMAN OF EXECUTIV COMMITTEE; professor of Germanic languages and literatures in Columbia University; New York, N. Y.

THOMAS G. TUCKER, professor of classical philology in the University of Melbourne; Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

E. O. VAILE, formerly editor of Intelligence; Oak Park, Chicago, Ill.

WILLIAM HAYES WARD, editor of the Independent; New York, N. Y.

ANDREW D. WHITE, formerly president of Cornell University; Ithaca, N. Y.

ROBERT S. WOODWARD, president of the Carnegie Institution of Washington; Washington, D. C.

JOSEPH WRIGHT, professor of comparativ philology in Oxford University; editor of the English Dialect Dictionary; Oxford, Eng.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

October, 1909

*1. A First Step. Announcement of the aims of the Board and of the names of its members. 4 pages, 8vo. March 21, 1906. Now combined with No. 6 and No. 12 in Circular No. 14.

*2. List of Common Words spelled in Two or more Ways. The Three Hundred Words, with introduction and rules. 12 pages, 8vo. March 21, 1906. Now combined with No. 5 in Circular No. 15.

3. The Amelioration of our Spelling. An address by Professor Calvin Thomas, LL.D. 8 pages, 8vo. April 12, 1906.

4. The Spelling of Yesterday and the Spelling of To-morrow. By Professor Brander Matthews, D.C.L. 8 pages, 8vo. May 7, 1906.

*5. List of Common Words spelled in Two or more Ways. The Three Hundred Words with Authorities. A different form of No. 2. 8 pages, 8vo. June 18, 1906. Now combined with No. 2 in Circular No. 15.

*6. A Statement about Simplified Spelling. Items of information and corrections of misapprehensions. 4 pages, 8vo. June 25, 1906. Now combined with No. 1 and No. 12 in Circular No. 14.

*7. Simplified Spelling in the Schools. 8 pages, 8vo. September 27, 1906.

*8. Simplified Spelling and the Universities. 8 pages, 8vo. October 20, 1906.

9. Mark Twain on Simplified Spelling. 4 pages, 8vo. November 10, 1906.

10. Simplified Spelling in Writing and Printing: a Publisher's Point of View. By Henry Holt, LL.D. 12 pages, 8vo. December 20, 1906.

11. The Medical Profession and Simplified Spelling. By Professor Burt G. Wilder, S.B., M.D. 4 pages, 8vo. February 28, 1907.

*[12.] A Letter to Signers. March 12, 1907. The substance has been revised and included in the enlarged Circular No. 14.

*[13.] Annual Meeting of the Simplified Spelling Board. April 3, 4, 5, 1907. 12 pages, 8vo. May 20, 1907. Contains the annual report, 1906-1907.

14. The Simplification of English Spelling. Announcement of the aims of the Simplified Spelling Board, a statement of principles, and a record of progress. 8 pages, 8vo. November 28, 1907. (Includes the original Circulars No. 1, March 21, 1906; No. 6, June 25, 1906; and No. 12, "A Letter to Signers," March 12, 1907.)

15. Three Hundred Words spelled in Two or More Ways. With introduction, rules, and references to authorities. 16 pages, 8vo. November 28, 1907. (Includes original Circulars No. 2, March 21, 1906; and No. 5, June 18, 1906.)

16. The Simplified Spelling Board. List of members and publications. 4 pages, 8vo. November 28, 1907. Third edition, June 25, 1909.

17. The Advisory Council of the Simplified Spelling Board. List of members. 8 pages, 8vo. January 28, 1908. Fourth edition, June 25, 1909.

18. Simplified Spellings: a Second List. 16 pages, 8vo. January 30, 1908.

19. The Problems Before Us. By Professor Thomas R. Lounsbury, LL.D., L.H.D. 16 pages, 8vo. June 6, 1908.

20. Simplified Spelling in Periodicals. By William Hayes Ward, D.D., LL.D. 4 pages, 8vo. June 8, 1908.

21. The Spelling of the Poets. By Professor Brander Matthews, D.C.L. 8 pages, 8vo. June 10, 1908.

22. Simplified Spellings: a Third List. 16 pages, 8vo. January 25, 1909.

23. Alfabetic List of Simplifications in Spelling recommended by the Simplified Spelling Board up to January 25, 1909. The successiv lists of simplifications recommended in circulars 15 (originally 2), 18, and 22 are here combined into one, with introduction and rules. 32 pages, 8vo. March 6, 1909.

24. Simplified Spelling: A Letter to Teachers. By Professor Calvin Thomas, LL.D. 12 pages, 8vo. September 15, 1909.

The circulars are sent free on request. Those markt with an asterisk, having servd their purpose, or having been incorporated in later circulars, as stated above, are, however, no longer sent out except on special request from persons or libraries wishing to complete their files.

The Board also publishes a series of small Leaflets for the use of speakers and for inclosing in letters, and circulates cards for signature by persons who wish to enter their names on the permanent list of adherents of the cause of simplified spelling.

The Board also publishes the SIMPLIFIED SPELLING BULLETIN, a quarterly periodical, which servs as a medium for news and discussion. Subscription ten cents a year; single copy five cents. Address Simplified Spelling Board, 1 Madison avenue, N. Y.

SIMPLIFIED SPELLING BOARD
1 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK
October 25, 1909

8. The Board begs leave to remind those who may be fearful in regard to the result of its recommendations, that spelling is never stable, and that there is no final standard of orthography. Nowhere is there any authority to set up such a standard. All that the accepted dictionaries can do is to record the varying usages. Their editors have received no charter to decide finally between conflicting forms, much less to propose improved forms. The Board, on the other hand, seeks to change what is bad, and to introduce improvements. It wishes to establish and extend good usage, to make it national and international.

9. The Board believes that the arguments against simplification are so weak that the expression of them will help the cause. It is confident that the more the matter is considered the larger will be the number of converts and the swifter the advance. Circumstances have prevented many intelligent persons, even many men of letters and journalists, from coming into contact with information upon the true nature and history of English spelling.

10. The Board welcomes criticism. It asks only that the criticisms shall be made after, and not before, the critic has read the publications of the Board. It does not wish to be considered responsible for proposals which it has not made, for views which it does not hold, or for things with which it has no concern.

11. The Board recognizes that the progress of the cause depends upon the continuous spreading of information. The work requires time and patience. New circulars and other documents will be sent out at intervals. All persons interested may rest assured that the work will go on steadily until the main object is accomplisht.

12. The Board has among its members not only scholars and educators, not only men of letters and men of affairs, but also specialists in linguistic science, including the editors of the leading English dictionaries—British and American. Perhaps, therefore, it has a right to be credited with some knowledge of the English language, of the history of English orthography, and of the difficulties to be overcome in the endeavor to simplify it. But the Board makes no claim to "authority"; and its proposals must stand on their own merits, each for itself.

13. The Board, as an independent body of men who have at heart only the interests of civilization, makes its appeal to the reason of mankind. It accepts the responsibility for its recommendations, present and future, because it knows that if there is to be progress, the initiativ must be taken by somebody. The simplification of spelling is no unconscious process, inevitable with-

out human effort. Without human effort, it would at once cease. Every one of the simplifications now accepted by all of us was once the overt act of a single individual, who was followed at first only by a small minority. If there is to be improvement in the future as there has been in the past, somebody must be willing to point the way, somebody must set the example, somebody must venture to propose the next step in advance.

14. The Board will welcome the cooperation of any individual or of any organization who may wish to aid in the good work. Difference of opinion will help rather than hinder. The more the subject is discust, the clearer the way will become, and the readier the public will be to take the next step in advance. The Board will receive with pleasure all suggestions that may be sent to it; and it will forward any of its documents, free of charge, to all who will ask.

III. A STATEMENT OF FACTS

1. Eighteen thousand persons have signed the agreement or adhesion card and have agreed to use all or some of the three hundred simplified spellings in their letters. The whole three hundred are now used in the correspondence of President Roosevelt, and of many officials in the executiv departments of the American government.

2. Nearly three hundred newspapers and magazines are using most or all of the new forms in their colums.

3. Two thousand firms and business houses are employing the simplified spellings in their commercial correspondence or advertising. In this way, hundreds of thousands of pamflets and advertisements in the new form have been circulated.

4. Three thousand members of the faculties of American colleges and universities have formally signed the agreement and are giving the movement their cordial support.

5. Many thousand other teachers have signed the agreement, and unnumbered thousands more are adherents of the movement.

6. The school systems of many cities and towns permit the teaching of the new forms in their class-rooms. Several spelling-books have appeared with the new forms included on equal terms with the old, or specially treated in the appendix.

7. The Board of Superintendents of New York City in 1906 unanimously recommended the use of the three hundred words in New York City schools.

8. Normal schools in Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and other states have adopted the new forms, and professors and students alike use them habitually.

9. The State Teachers' Associations of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin have recently again approved simplified spelling. Some have annual and some have permanent committees to promote the idea. Business schools and shorthand schools are taking up the practise, and some of their State and national conventions have committees at work. Students in universities and colleges, and in normal and technical schools, are adopting the principle and the practise, and many are now working to spread information and to increase the number of adherents.

10. The Modern Language Association at its annual meeting at New Haven, in December, 1906, voted to use the three hundred shorter forms in its publications.

11. The National Educational Association adopted in 1898 the simplified spellings known as the Twelve Words (*catalog, prolog, demagog, pedagog, program, tho, altho, thoro, thorofare, thoroly, thru, thruout*), and has used them in its publications ever since. At its meeting in July, 1907, at Los Angeles, the Association past, in open convention, by an overwhelming majority, a resolution reaffirming its approval of simplified spelling, endorsing the principles and efforts of the Simplified Spelling Board, and directing the use of the whole three hundred words in the publications of the Association.

12. The editors of the six great dictionaries of the English language—Webster's International Dictionary, the Century, the Standard, the Oxford Dictionary, the English Dialect Dictionary and Skeat's Etymological Dictionary—have approved the movement, and are now members of the Simplified Spelling Board.

13. The British names now included in the membership of the Simplified Spelling Board testify to the widespread interest which has been taken in the movement in Great Britain, and to the sympathy of the foremost scholars, and gives promise of the desired international cooperation. The British Ambassador to the United States, Mr. James Bryce, has exprest his approval.

14. The most important accomplishment thus far, however, is that the discussion of simplified spelling by nearly every journal printed in English, and by innumerable publications in other languages, has stimulated hundreds of thousands of persons to give serious attention to the spelling and the history of the English language. Even if no other result had been obtained, this in itself is well worth all the effort which has been made.

15. Every one who has been led to think about the language he uses, must have become convinced of one thing—that English spelling has always been undergoing changes which make for

simplification, and that the continuation of this process is natural and reasonable. Until this truth—that English is not and never has been a fixt language—is accepted, little can be done to overcome the prejudice of those who regard any change even in English spelling as an irreverent and violent attack on something which has existed unchanged for ever. With wider knowledge of the fact that English spelling has undergone constant modification, the idea of further scientific simplification must appeal to every one as being in accordance with the genius of the language.

THE SIMPLIFIED SPELLING BOARD

1 Madison avenue, New York
November 28, 1907

*** A list of the members of the Simplified Spelling Board, and of the publications of the Board, is printed in a separate circular, which may be had free upon request, together with any other circulars desired. A blank card of agreement to use simplified spellings as far as may be practicable, is sent to all inquirers. Persons who sign the card have their names placed upon the official roll of adherents, and will receive subsequent publications. Additional circulars and cards will be sent to any one who wishes to promote the cause by personal effort. Address the SIMPLIFIED SPELLING BOARD, 1 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N. Y.